

**Making it local: Contextuating programming on
commercial free-to-air television in Australia.**

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Certificate of authorship/originality

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-------------|
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENT | iii |
| ABSTRACT..... | viii |
| CHAPTER 1: ARE YOU TALKING TO ME?..... | 1 |
| Thesis Overview | 9 |
| CHAPTER 2: THE AUSTRALIAN TELEVISION SYSTEM..... | 10 |
| Definitions | 12 |
| Chapter Overview | 17 |
| The Australian Television Broadcasting Context | 20 |
| A Mixed System..... | 20 |
| Networks, Affiliates and Regional Stations | 24 |
| Networking, Simultaneous Programming and Differentiation | 27 |
| Pay TV | 30 |
| Pay TV and Sport | 32 |
| Pay TV and Programming | 34 |
| Free-to-air Programming | 35 |
| Technology | 40 |
| Content Regulation | 41 |
| Cunningham's Four Phase History of Australian Television | 44 |
| Prehistory..... | 45 |
| First Phase 1956-63 | 46 |
| Second Phase 1964-75..... | 49 |
| Third Phase 1975-87 | 49 |
| Fourth Phase Summary 1987-Late 1990s | 52 |
| Reflections on History | 54 |
| History and Programming | 56 |
| Local and National Histories | 57 |
| Conclusion..... | 59 |
| CHAPTER 3: CONTEXTUATING PROGRAMMING: FEATURES AND FUNCTIONS..... | 60 |
| Chapter Overview | 65 |
| Not the Programs | 66 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Typology | 68 |
| Contextuating Programming..... | 70 |
| Contextuating a Nation | 72 |
| Contextuating Flow | 74 |
| Contextuating Languages..... | 75 |
| Television Systems (1): Free-to-air Television and Pay TV | 80 |
| Television Systems (2): Free-to-air Television: Commercial and Government Sponsored | 83 |
| SBS | 83 |
| ABC | 86 |
| The Functions of Contextuating Programming | 87 |
| Disruption and Cohesion | 88 |
| Broadcast Borders and Places | 92 |
| Watermarks | 94 |
| Co-presence and Spatiality | 95 |
| Network Territories | 99 |
| The Wollongong Fillers | 101 |
| Trailers | 105 |
| Contextuating Programming as Transitional Programming | 106 |
| Program Credit Sequences | 106 |
| Program Choices..... | 108 |
| Transitional Contextuating Programming Between <i>News at 4:30</i> and <i>M*A*S*H</i> | 109 |
| Transitional Contextuating Programming During <i>M*A*S*H</i> | 114 |
| Scheduling the Broadcast Nation..... | 117 |
| National Temporalities | 118 |
| Calling an Australian Nation..... | 120 |
| Conclusion..... | 121 |

CHAPTER 4: NATIONHOOD, CONTEXTUATING PROGRAMMING AND THE CHANNEL 7

| | |
|--|------------|
| COVERAGE OF THE OLYMPIC GAMES IN 2000 AND 2004..... | 124 |
| Chapter Overview | 126 |
| Nation-watching..... | 127 |
| Localised Programming | 130 |
| Simultaneous Broadcasting and Nation-building | 131 |
| Time-zoned Spaces..... | 132 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| The Case Studies..... | 135 |
| Sydney 2000..... | 135 |
| Athens 2004 | 138 |
| Contextuating Programming in the Olympic Games Broadcasts..... | 140 |
| Local Hosts | 140 |
| Videographics..... | 142 |
| Rhythmic Patterns of Contextuating Programming..... | 144 |
| Hierarchy of Contextuating Programming | 146 |
| Major Sponsors and Transitional Programming..... | 148 |
| Networking and Regional Differentiation..... | 150 |
| watermarks and regionality..... | 154 |
| local versions..... | 155 |
| promos..... | 156 |
| community announcements..... | 157 |
| local business..... | 158 |
| The Case of Alice Springs..... | 159 |
| SBS and the 2004 Olympic Games..... | 163 |
| Localised Nation..... | 163 |
| Glocal Heroes..... | 166 |
| Conclusion..... | 168 |
| CHAPTER 5: THE FIFTH PHASE..... | 169 |
| Chapter Overview | 170 |
| The Fifth Phase: 2005 Onwards | 170 |
| Television Formats | 170 |
| Video and DVD | 171 |
| Digital Television | 172 |
| Community Television | 173 |
| Pay TV..... | 174 |
| Advertising..... | 175 |
| Convergence and Diversification | 177 |
| Conclusion..... | 180 |
| CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION..... | 182 |
| Futures for Contextuating Programming | 189 |
| Contextuating Programming on Australian Television..... | 189 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| Contextuating Programming and Non-television Broadcasting | 190 |
| Contextuating Programming and New Media | 192 |
| Contextuating Programming and Global Spheres..... | 194 |
| APPENDIX A: CONTEXTUATING PROGRAMMING BETWEEN AND DURING PROGRAMS. | 196 |
| Table A1. Transitional Contextuating Programming Between <i>News at 4:30</i> and <i>M*A*S*H</i> | 197 |
| Table A2. Transitional Contextuating Programming During <i>M*A*S*H</i> | 198 |
| APPENDIX B: EXAMPLE OF CONTEXTUATING PROGRAMMING, OLYMPIC GAMES 2004 | 199 |
| Table B1. Log of Olympic Games Broadcast, Alice Springs, NT, August 21, 2005 | 199 |
| APPENDIX C: EXAMPLES OF ADVERTISEMENTS, OLYMPIC GAMES, 2000 AND 2004..... | 207 |
| Table C1. Smith's Crisps (food), 2004..... | 207 |
| Table C2. <i>Adelaide Seven Nightly News</i> , 2004 | 207 |
| Table C3. <i>Adelaide Seven Nightly News</i> , 2004 | 208 |
| Table C4. Olympic Games: <i>Celebrate Humanity</i> , 2000a | 208 |
| Table C5. Olympic Games: <i>Celebrate Humanity</i> , 2000b | 209 |
| Table C6. Olympic Games: <i>Celebrate Humanity</i> , 2004 | 209 |
| Table C7. IBM (information technology), 2000..... | 210 |
| Table C8. Westpac (banking/finance), 2000 | 211 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 212 |

ABSTRACT

This study investigates how global, national and local identities are articulated in television practices. Specifically, I focus my analysis on the non-program material of television and argue that this material participates in the articulation of national identities that are simultaneously positioned within regional spaces and a global television sphere. That is, viewers are positioned as located in particular places that are situated interdependently within a national television system and culture that operates in a global television environment.

In order to grapple with the complexity of the ways in which non-program material locates and positions viewers, I coin the term “contextuating programming” and in my study I analyse a number of instances of Australian television to examine how contextuating programming operates in different programming contexts and in different broadcasting regions of Australia. I analyse a segment of contextuating programming during a television program and also a segment from the end of one program to the beginning of another and draw conclusions about how contextuating programming functions differently in these environments. I also examine regional “fillers” to determine how they function in local identity-building. My major analysis of contextuating programming is of the free-to-air broadcasts of the Olympic Games in 2000 (Sydney) and 2004 (Athens) when simultaneous broadcasting across Australia of the global media event revealed much about how the Australian television system positions viewers as having global, national and local identities.

The contextuating programming of the commercial free-to-air television system in Australia speaks of the specificities of that system, particularly the relationships between network, affiliate and regional stations, and the relationships between imported and locally produced programming. My research concludes that while television promotes itself as being a global force, television practices are intricately and powerfully tied to specific notions of local and national identity. Finally, I identify areas where research into practices similar to contextuating programming would further expand our understanding of the intricacies between local, regional, national and global practices and identities.